

The Ascension of our Lord (observing)  
May 13, 2018

Text: 1 John 5:9-15  
Theme: "God's Testimony"

Testimony is what a witness gives. A witness testifies to what he has firsthand knowledge. Let me testify about Mom. It is Mother's Day. Each of us most likely is in a position to give a testimony about Mom, someone we know or knew very well. Maybe you don't think a lot about it, but she's always just there. She feeds you, takes care of you, encourages you when you are low. She can redirect if you are headed in the wrong direction, maybe remind you that you are not in charge. Different moms have different temperaments so all this takes a bit different look from mom to mom.

Do we think about how dependent we are (were) on Mom? Maybe we remember Mom as we raise our own children. How did Mom do it? We may appreciate what she did a lot more when we are trying to do what she did. Now maybe she is only a memory. She's gone, been gone for some time or her passing could be quite recent.

We may remember Mom's testimony to us, directions about how to live, directions spoken from experience. This mirror and the toothbrush and comb can remind us of some of those instructions. Perhaps she told us to take a look in the mirror before we got on with our day. That could help us recognize the need to brush our teeth and comb our hair. A mirror can be helpful in examining our teeth especially to see if there is something

stuck in them. Glancing in the mirror we can see how well our hair is behaving itself. Then the condition can be remedied with the brush and the comb. In love Mom wants what is best for us. She can give testimony as to what is the best.

There's an even more reliable testimony than Mom's. It's our Father's testimony, our heavenly Father. John tells us, "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." (vs 9) John gives us God's testimony today. God has a lot to tell us, to show us through His mirror, the Law. Do we think we have no sin? Well we are wrong. Momma told me not to come, but I did anyone and it did not work out so well. There's no way around what the mirror shows. I could say, "no, that's not me," or, "that's not really dirt, just looks like it." That would only be an exercise in self-deception or trying to tell God He's mistaken about this sin thing, about mine at least.

God's mirror always shows us the result of our sin, the tragedy—no child of mine, that is, for those who are living for sin. 'If we say we have fellowship with God while we walk in the darkness, we lie (1 John 1:5) Light is something that makes itself known not through proclaiming, but through shining. Call darkness light does not make it any brighter. John tells us that the no one who abides in God keeps on sinning (3:6). Those who would continue sin, that is, living to follow the old nature are not of God, but of the devil (3:8). This is God's testimony about sin. You don't comb your hair so you can mesh it up, it does get out of place again, but the disheveled look is not the goal.

God has more to say, much sweeter words of testimony, words about clean teeth and combed hair, or rather, cleaned teeth and combed hair. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1, 2). We do have sin, but if we walk in the light as He is in the light...the blood of Jesus His Son cleans us from all sin (1:7). God has something to say about forgiveness and life, to use the words He gives through John, "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son does not have life." (vs 11, 12) John also says, "Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself." (vs 10)

God wants us to know this. God wants us to hear this. God wants us to believe this. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that **you may know** you have eternal life." (vs 13) "And this is the confidence we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us." (vs 14) So God testifies and assures us.

But maybe it's been a long time since we heard the words, been a while since we heard Mom's voice. Maybe we heard it well enough but then when she wasn't around, we didn't heed it. Mom said, "no, don't do that. It's bad for you and bad for those around you." We could even hear her saying, "Stop!" But everyone else seemed to be pretty okay with it. Maybe grungy teeth and frazzled hair are not so bad. There may be those saying, "Now Mom was an example of faith and faithfulness, but her day

has passed.” Things have changed since Mom’s day. Her ideas about morality, this one man for one woman for one lifetime business in marriage, well, that’s only one option and maybe not that appealing actually. Morality has a new look, no matter what’s stuck in your teeth or the condition of your hair, that’s the look for you. Her day is past, also, that level of devotion and care for the family, there’s no time for that any more. Mom’s testimony is only a voice from the past.

Perhaps there were those saying that about John. It has been a while, maybe, since he had been with the recipients of this letter. Now other prophets had come along. They too were proclaiming Jesus so what could be wrong? Were they saying, “Hey, I’m a Jesus’ man just like John. I never spent any time with Him, but certainly want you to know about him the way I understand him. I’m telling you more of the one that John started to tell you about. He can fit right in with what the philosophers in the know are saying, those speaking of a knowledge that truly perceives the evil of the matter and the good of the spirit. We can testify to this Jesus who is freed of this drag of the body.” It’s been a while since John has been on the scene. These men were testimony tarnishers, proclaiming a lesser Christ who was no Christ at all.

It’s been a while since Jesus has ascended. Many have tried to add to His Word. Many have called into question His return. He’s been gone a long time. Where is He? There are plenty of testimony tarnishers around. In our day, our culture, this importance of matter versus spirit has been flip flopped. Now for many matter is all that matters, all there is. Doubts

arise, doubts are strengthened while Jesus' testimony is neglected, laid aside.

Doubts arise from within us. Those doubts can go many directions. One is to doubt God's words about life. Maybe the more we try to tidy up the more we see we have not succeeded. It's chewing those little pills after you have brushed your teeth and you find your fine looking teeth are not so fine after all. You look in the mirror of God's law and wow, that's me! Maybe we've had a bad hair day, a few bad hair months or years. But we go on. One day we will die and we hope for the best but we are not very hopeful.

If we look to our own accomplishments we have no hope. The mirror doesn't lie about our sin. But we are directed to the divine witness. John witnessed the Divine. Did he see the one with perfect teeth and perfect hair? Well stuff would be stuck between Jesus' teeth like anyone else, and His hair would be blown in the wind and catching dust. But in this One there was never any stain of sin. Every hair was in place when it came to fulfilling all righteousness and there were never any particles of sin to remove. John and the other apostles saw one the likes of whom they had never witnessed. No one ever spoke like this man. Now one ever did the signs that was done by this One.

Oh what they saw and oh how they were tried and tested. There were growing crowds and gathering opposition. They went up to Jerusalem at His leading. He told them what would happen, but how devastated they were when it did. John testifies about the testifiers of

Jesus. “This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: The Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three are one.” (1 John 4:6-8)  
The Spirit testifies that Jesus came by the water and the blood.

At John’s baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus as testimony to John the Baptist that this is the One to come, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Son of God. And then there was the blood—His blood at the cross, not just blood, but water and blood (John 19:34). He had died. John saw it and testifies about it. “He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.” (John 19:35)

There is now a constant testimony at the Father’s right hand. Yes, it happens as Jesus said, the death and then “after three days He will rise.” (Mark 16:7) He did. They saw Him. They heard Him. They touched Him. They ate with Him. He taught them for 40 days and they saw Him rise into the sky and disappear in the clouds. They heard the words of the angel, ‘He’ll be back in the same way that you saw him go.’ They obeyed Jesus’ words. They waited in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. And then they began that work of proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the world beginning in Jerusalem. Jesus sits at the right hand testifying, pleading the fact that all sins have been atoned for, there making intercession for us. He gave a little sample, perhaps, of

what was to come in John 17, “I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one.” (John 17:15)

Ascension, glorious ascension, our brother has ascended to the right hand of the Father exalted (according to His human nature) far above every power and authority not only now, but forever. His King of kings and Lord of lords ruling all for the sake of His body, the church. So it's testifying time, time for you and me, brother and sister. These are the days of our testimony. We always begin by hearing God's testimony again. Listen to the testimony of the Spirit. Whoever has the Son has life! Whoever believes has this testimony. It's yours. You are His. It is what He says and that's stronger and more reliable than what any man or mom could ever say. See the witness of the water and the blood. Remember the Spirit filled waters of baptism poured out on you. Remember the blood shed for you that you receive in the Lord's Supper, shed for the forgiveness of your sin.

It's yours, mine. But it's not to be kept bottled up inside, under lock and key for safe keeping. No, it shows, it flows forth, even erupts. It is the testimony of service to our brothers and sister. It's not a matter of getting your card punched and then off your merry way to be merry in whatever way suits your fancy. No, we don't live for sin. We live for righteousness, even hunger and thirst for it. We have the smile of service and the attractive head of hair of humility. We have the words of hope, sure hope. We speak of the hope we have in us, the living hope of the living and reigning Lord. It is why we are still here.

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.  
He who has the Son has life. Who does not have Him does not have life.  
We have Him, have Him through faith. We want more to hear God's  
testimony. For Jesus' sake. Amen